

# 'THIS IS FOR THE KIDS'



Calvin Tynes, an inmate at the New Castle Correctional Facility, wraps a gift for a needy child. Thirteen inmates took part in wrapping presents for a Westminster Community Center holiday program. Money for the gifts - about \$7,500 - was raised through inmate package purchases. (C-T photo Craig Mauger)

Prison,  
inmates,  
nonprofit  
come together  
to help  
families for  
the holidays

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The last time Calvin Tynes wrapped a Christmas gift was in 1990.

So as he creased wrapping paper and cut it to fit around a T-shirt on Wednesday morning, memories came rushing back to him.

Tynes has been locked up at various prisons in Indiana for 19 years. On Wednesday, he was one of 13 inmates at the New Castle Correctional Facility

who volunteered to wrap \$7,500 in Christmas gifts to be donated to needy children in Henry County.

For the GEO Group, which runs the New Castle prison, Westminster Community Center, the nonprofit behind the program, and the inmates, the work of finding families in need, buying gifts and wrapping them is about one thing: giving a happy Christmas to children who would otherwise not have one.

As Tynes worked in the

prison's visitation room, he said the wonderful part about the program is that it benefits kids.

Wearing a tan prison uniform, he said it was great to see the names of the children scribbled in black marker on the boxes in which the gifts the inmates wrapped were placed.

Each year, a percentage of the money spent on packages for inmates by family and friends goes to charity. For the past three years, money has gone to

Westminster Community Center's efforts to provide Christmas gifts for needy families.

Once the money is in hand, prison staff members go to stores - this year Kohl's and Toys R Us - to buy clothes and toys. Seventy children will each receive \$40 in clothes and \$60 in toys because of the prison's efforts.

After the items are purchased, inmates volunteer to wrap the gifts.

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## Two burglary suspects appear in Superior

Charges filed against the New Castle men

Castle, appeared for initial hearings Wednesday in Henry Superior Court

ment officer. Smith is also charged with one count of residential entry.

tering a police officer.

A trial date of April 12 was set for both men.

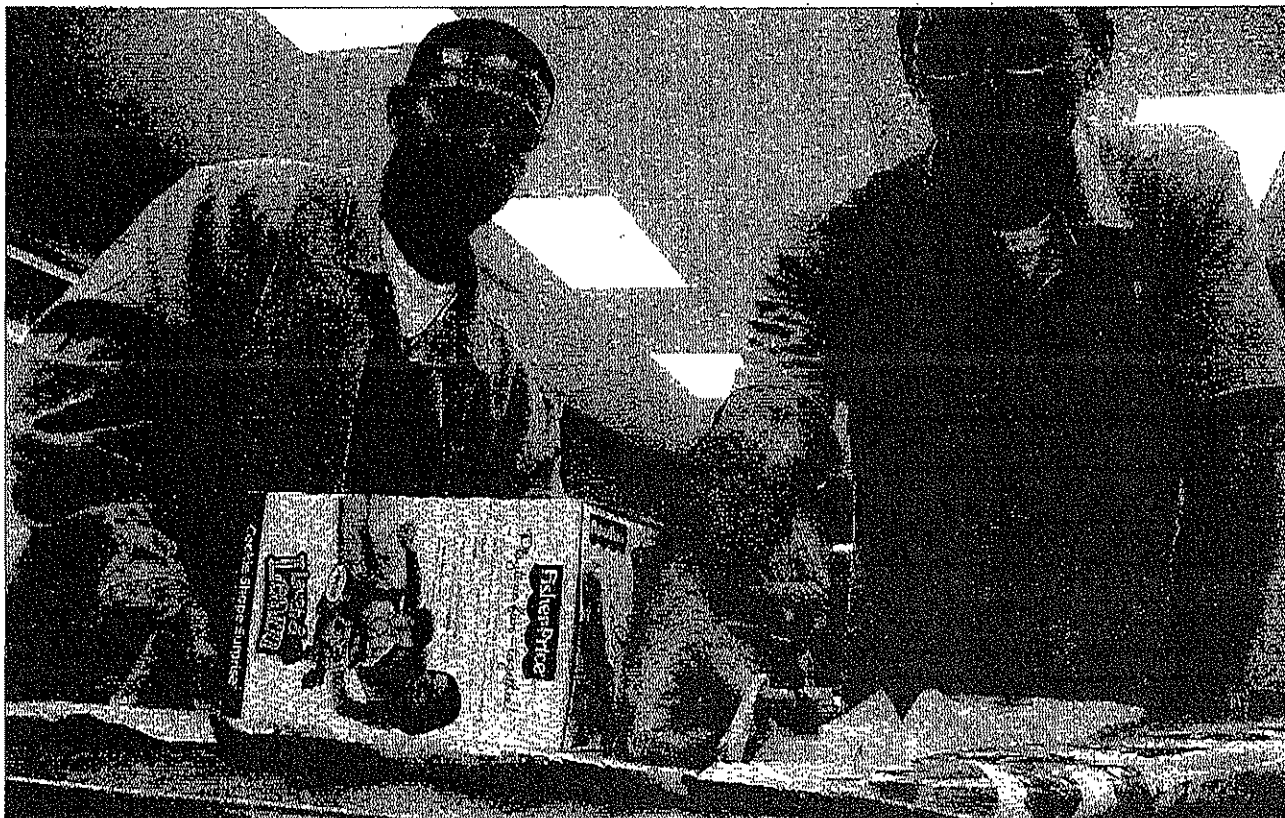
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Marroquin Antonel, left, and Darrel Scurlock wrap a gift for a needy child as part of a Westminster Community Center program. Scurlock said after he is released from prison, he plans to do more charity. (C-T photo Craig Mauger)

## INMATES

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On Wednesday, it was an all-day task. With holiday music, like "F.H. Be Home for Christmas," playing in the background, the inmates worked from about 9:30 a.m. until 3 p.m.

Then, Westminster collected the gifts, so it can dispense them before Christmas.

For Scott Fitch, the assistant superintendent of the New Castle Correctional Facility, the program is

with their families, and the Christmas program is a way for them to celebrate the holiday by wrapping gifts for other families.

Inmate Brian Birdsong said he has four children. He said it's rough to be in prison on the holidays because he knows his family is on the outside without him.

Although Birdsong said he had never wrapped a Christmas gift before he was put in prison, he said the Westminster program provides some good practice.

By about 10:30 a.m. Wednesday he had already

Jeff Kundert, Westminster Community Center executive director, said Westminster is trying to buy gifts for about 170 children this year. The prison is helping out with about 70 of them, he said.

He said the Christmas gift program helps families who don't have extra money to spend on holiday gifts for their children.

"If you put your feet into those kind of shoes, you wish there was somebody that could kind of help you make it through," Kundert said.

Don Stine, superintendent of the New Castle

est privately-run prison in the U.S. and the second largest in the world.

As for the Christmas program, Stine said many inmates feel remorse for what they've done in their past, and because of that, they enjoy volunteering and wrapping presents for children in need.

For inmate Darrell Scurlock, the wrapping was a fun activity.

Scurlock said he would like to be able to see the children's faces as they open their gifts on Christmas day. But he said he knows he won't be able to because he'll be behind